Research Article

Development and Psychometric Validation of the Political Silence Scale*

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Abstract: Political silence refers to the failure of political thought to translate into political action for various reasons. Individuals may remain silent out of fear that future interests will be harmed or to secure specific benefits. This study aims to conceptualize political silence among individuals as a multidimensional construct by focusing on academics in Türkiye and to develop a valid and reliable measurement scale. The research, based on a quantitative design, includes scale development and psychometric validation. During the scale development process, an item pool was generated from the relevant literature, and content validity was established through expert evaluation. To examine the construct validity of the scale, an Exploratory Factor Analysis was performed on data from 640 academics in the first stage, and a Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted on data from 643 academics in the second stage. The scale's reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, and convergent and discriminant validity were assessed using composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The findings demonstrate that the political silence scale developed in this study is a valid and reliable measurement instrument comprising four subdimensions: protest-based, perceived risk-based, conformity-based, and value-based political silence.

Keywords: Silence, Political Silence, The Spiral of Silence
Jel Codes: D72, Z13, P16.

Siyasal Sessizlik Ölçeğinin Geliştirilmesi ve Psikometrik Doğrulaması

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Öz: Siyasal sessizlik, bireyin sahip olduğu siyasal düşüncenin kamuoyu önünde ifade edilmemesidir. Bireyin siyasal düşüncesini ifade edememesi menfaat elde etmek ya da korku gibi çeşitli sebeplere bağlı olarak ortaya çıkabilir. Bu çalışma, akademisyenlerin siyasal sessizlik nedenlerini çok boyutlu bir biçimde ele almayı ve siyasal sessizliği ölçmeye yarayacak bir ölçek geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma nicel araştırma desenine dayalı olarak ölçek geliştirme ve psikometrik doğrulama sürecini içermektedir. Ölçek geliştirme sürecinde literatürde yer alan bilgilerden yola çıkılarak madde havuzu oluşturulmuş ve oluşturulan madde havuzunun kapsam geçerliliği uzman görüşleri doğrultusunda elde edilmiştir. Ölçeğin yapı geçerliliği için ilk aşamada 640 akademisyenden elde edilen verilerle Açımlayıcı Faktör Analizi, ikinci aşamada ise 643 akademisyenden elde edilen verilerle Doğrulayıcı Faktör Analizi gerçekleştirilmiştir. Ölçeğin güvenirliği Cronbach alfa katsayısı ile hesaplanmış, yakınsak ve ayrışma geçerliği ise bileşik güvenirlik (CR), ortalama açıklanan varyans (AVE) ve Fornell–Larcker kriterleri temelinde incelenmiştir. Elde edilen sonuçlar, geliştirilen siyasal sessizlik ölçeğinin protesto temelli, algılanan risk temelli, uyum temelli ve değer temelli olmak üzere dört alt boyutlu geçerli ve güvenilir bir ölçme aracı olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sessizlik, Siyasal Sessizlik, Suskunluk Sarmalı.
Jel Kodları: D72, Z13, P16

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1. Introduction

Silence has been equated with concepts such as "absence," "lack," and "passivity," and is therefore often viewed as difficult to explain. Particularly in political science literature, since political processes are mostly evaluated through visible behaviors, discourses, or actions, situations such as remaining silent, refraining from expressing an opinion, or staying in the background in the public sphere have been relegated to a secondary position. However, silence is a communicative phenomenon that conveys meaning through the absence of speech and requires interpretation and explanation.

Silence is a communicative stance that can be understood in terms of the power dynamics and expectations of the environment in which an individual lives. The individual is a political animal (Aristotle, 2013) and in the absence of such dynamics, exhibits a different form of behavior.

This study aims to examine the factors influencing political silence within a multidimensional framework. In this regard, the study conceptualizes political silence as four distinct dimensions, —protest-based, perceived-risk-based, conformity-based, and value-based,—and demonstrates that political silence is a multilayered form of behavior.

This study is based on a quantitative field study conducted among academic staff in Türkiye. The primary reason for selecting academics as the sample is that they are the only public employees in Türkiye who face no legal barriers to engaging in political activities. The data obtained from the measurement tool developed for the study were analyzed using statistical methods, and efforts were made to identify the structural characteristics of political silence. In this regard, the study provides a theoretical framework and explains the phenomenon of political silence through empirical findings.

2. The Concepts of Silence and Political Silence

In the Turkish Language Association's dictionary, silence means the absence of noise or stillness. Human scientists define silence as inaction (Nader, 2001). In the American Journal of Psychotherapy, silence is defined as a state within the individual in which the individual communicates with themselves (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). According to Morrison & Milliken (2000), silence does not merely express refusal or opposition; it can also stem from individuals' lack of information, the absence of opportunities to express themselves, or the belief that voicing their ideas might be unnecessary or even dangerous. A review of the literature on this topic reveals that various academic disciplines attribute different meanings to silence. In psychology, silence conveys meanings such as withdrawal, lack of self-confidence, introversion, and a state of rest; in sociology, it has been characterized primarily as negative phenomena, such as social silence, inaction, and the suppression of society. In communication literature, silence is recognized as a form of communication that embodies various types of information, emotions, and intentions (Brinsfield et al., 2009). In management literature, however, it involves direct demands, protests, objections, and efforts to mobilize public opinion directed at management and other high-level authorities (Pinder & Harlos, 2001).

Generally speaking, research on silence has developed in three waves. The first wave began in the 1970s and lasted until the mid-1980s. During this period, the focus was on conceptualizing sound; sound and silence were categorized, and analyses of "spirals of silence" were conducted. In the second wave, which lasted from the mid-1980s to the 2000s, research on sound and silence increased significantly as it intersected with phenomena such as whistleblowing, principled organizational dissent, issue framing, and complaints. Other prominent topics during this period included "deaf ear syndrome" and social exclusion. The current third wave, meanwhile, is characterized by new research guided by the work of the previous wave.

In the literature, there are two distinct concepts related to silence: organizational silence and employee silence. Organizational silence (for a more detailed discussion, see Henriksen & Dayton, 2006; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003) refers to the situation in which

employees consciously withhold their opinions and thoughts about technical or behavioral issues related to work and the workplace (Çakıcı, 2007). In other words, organizational silence refers to the phenomenon where some employees say or do very little in response to problems faced by the organization (Biçer, 2024). Morrison and Milliken define organizational silence as the phenomenon of doing or saying very little, at the collective level, about the problems the organization faces (Amah & Okafor, 2008). At the core of organizational silence lie implicit beliefs and assumptions about employees and organizational management that managers do not explicitly articulate (Şehitoğlu, 2010).

Employee silence is defined as the act of withholding one's behavioral, cognitive, and emotional interpretations of organizational events from the person who has the authority to influence or rectify the situation (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). Employees determine the situations in which they should remain silent based on their own experiences and discussions with other employees. Many employees believe they are not alone in remaining silent about problems. Consequently, silence often occurs as a collective phenomenon (Milliken et al., 2003).

Political silence, however, is not a clearly defined concept in political science. Most studies analyze political behavior in terms of speaking, debating, and refraining from participating in the public sphere, and thus characterize individuals who remain silent in the political arena as "disinterested" or "passive." To move beyond this reductive approach, the conceptual boundaries of political silence must be clearly delineated.

Political silence is the deliberate and conscious avoidance of expressing one's thoughts on political issues, despite the existence of such thoughts. In this definition, political silence refers to a recurring or consistent pattern of behavior and represents the suspension of expression as a cognitive state.

Political silence is often confused with political apathy. Political apathy is a state of indifference or reluctance toward politics. Political silence, however, is a conscious avoidance of expressing one's views, even when interest and willingness are present. Furthermore, political silence does not imply a complete abandonment of political participation. This is because an individual may refrain from expressing their political views simply because they do not wish to be seen by others, even while engaging in various forms of political participation—such as voting—whose actors may remain anonymous.

An individual may refrain from expressing their political views at any moment in social life outside the political sphere—whether at work, in educational settings, among friends, or at home, even within the family. Even though freedom of expression is largely guaranteed by law in democratic societies, individuals may choose silence as a rational strategy, weighing the potential costs (social exclusion, professional risks, political pressure, etc.). This situation demonstrates that political silence cannot be reduced to the assumption of a single public sphere.

In the literature, political silence has been theoretically examined in terms of the nature of silence (Viera et al., 2019), the political agency of silence (Ferguson, 2003), and whether silence should be regarded as a democratic right (Viera, 2005).

In studies conducted through the lens of political processes and political dimensions, political silence is analyzed using a limited set of variables, thereby overlooking its multidimensional nature. In this study, based on field research, political silence is examined in a multilayered manner. Accordingly, political silence can emerge based on protest, perceived risk, conformity, values, and hopelessness.

3. The Theoretical Basis of Political Silence

The spiral of silence, a process by which public opinion is formed, is described by Tocqueville in his work "L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution". Describing how contempt for religion became a widespread and dominant sentiment among 18th-century French people, Tocqueville notes that one of the main reasons for this was the French Church's

"retreat into silence": "Those who remained firmly attached to the old faith feared they would be the only ones doing so, and because they feared isolation more than they feared making a mistake, they joined the masses even if they did not share their views. In this way, the views of only a portion of the population appeared to be the views of everyone. For this very reason, it had become irresistible to those responsible for this deceptive appearance" (as cited in Noelle-Neumann, 1974).

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's "spiral of silence" theory, developed in the second half of the 20th century to understand and explain the relationship between the media and public opinion, paved the way for a return to strong influences in media research during the 1980s. The theory was developed within the field of public opinion studies, stemming from the question, "Why should we abandon a conception of public opinion based on the elite?" (Noelle-Neumann, 1998). According to Noelle-Neumann, observations made in one's environment cause some people to voice their thoughts aloud, while others keep their views to themselves. This situation unfolds in a spiral-like process, continuing until some become completely dominant in society, while others are entirely erased from the public stage and remain silent.

Noelle-Neumann categorizes approaches to public opinion into two main groups: public opinion as rationality and public opinion as social control. When rationality is taken as the basis for defining public opinion, it is "the freely and openly expressed views of the public on matters of concern to them, who believe they have the right to influence or determine the government's actions, its members, or its structure." This definition also determines the direction of public opinion. Public opinion is a form of communication from citizens to the government. For public opinion to emerge, this channel from citizens to the government must be open. If the formation and expression of opinions are hindered, public opinion cannot emerge. In political regimes without freedom of thought and expression, public opinion cannot exist (Speier, 1995).

Noelle-Neumann views public opinion as a tool of social control (İrvan, 2012). This perspective, which fundamentally reflects a mass-society approach, regards public opinion as a force that fosters consensus and harmony within society (Noelle-Neumann, 1998). According to Noelle-Neumann (1998), public opinion consists of "opinions expressed in public without the risk of exclusion, or opinions that a person must express in order to avoid exclusion." From the perspective of silence theory, the defining element of public opinion is the fear of social exclusion. As a mechanism of control, public opinion affects everyone in society.

Those in favor of conformity must express their opinions to demonstrate their alignment. Those opposed to conformity, however, will refrain from expressing their views due to fear of exclusion (Yaylagül, 2008). Unvoiced opinions will not be part of public opinion. In a debate, what matters is not the quality of the arguments, but the perceived power of the parties presenting them. In environments where opposing views exist, different sides adopt different attitudes toward expressing their opinions. The side that openly states and defends its views creates the impression of being stronger, thereby influencing people to join these ranks (Noelle-Neumann, 1998). The spiral of silence represents a dynamic socio-psychological process in which individuals continuously observe societal changes and attempt to adapt to them. As certain views lose their popularity and social acceptance, individuals tend to abandon those perspectives and align themselves with emerging dominant opinions.

This theory, which is based on the view that society threatens to exclude and expel individuals who deviate from the common consensus, while individuals, on the other hand, harbor an unconscious fear of exclusion, rests on four fundamental assumptions and a fifth assumption that concludes the formation, maintenance, and change of public opinion by linking these assumptions together: (i) Society threatens to exclude individuals who deviate from the consensus, (ii) Individuals constantly live in fear of exclusion, (iii) Due to this fear of exclusion, individuals constantly observe and evaluate the environments in which opinions are formed, (iv) The impressions gained from these

observations influence the individual's behavior within society, particularly regarding whether to express or withhold their views (speaking or remaining silent), (v) It combines these four assumptions and concludes the formation, maintenance, and change of public opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1998).

Noelle-Neumann has provided a broader understanding of the sociological foundations of public opinion formation and its social dynamics. The spiral of silence is Noelle-Neumann's most significant contribution in this field. The spiral of silence describes the outcome of a situation in which a specific population is repeatedly exposed to persistent, consistent media coverage of prevailing views on current events and critical, controversial issues. An individual's primary motivation is to conform—at least outwardly—in order to avoid discomfort, discord, and the fear of isolation. Thus, over time, a spiral of opinion shift in favor of a particular viewpoint emerges (McQuail, 2014). The spiral of silence theory integrates interpersonal communication with mass communication, macro- and micro-level analyses, content and audiences, sociology, and psychology (Donsbach et al., 2014).

4. Reasons for Political Silence

There are various reasons why individuals may refrain from expressing their political views. Tse & Lee (2025) sought to explain the reasons why people avoid expressing their political views in increasingly authoritarian societies through a field study conducted in Hong Kong. Tse & Lee's central argument is that while the reason for avoiding political discussions in democratic societies is to maintain peace, in authoritarian societies, it is largely the individual's instinct for self-preservation. Tse & Lee listed the reasons for political silence as perceived legal risk, perceived social risk, hopelessness, political orientation, and a tendency to conform. Eliasoph (1998) noted that volunteers in civil society organizations in the United States often avoid political discussions to avoid causing discomfort to others. In his work "Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification", Kuran (1997) argues that individuals conceal their true thoughts due to social pressure and fear, exhibit different behavior in the public sphere, or remain silent. Chen (2018) found that individuals who believe they hold a minority opinion within a group remain silent due to social isolation. In their study conducted in the U.S., Gibson & Sutherland (2023) concluded that the primary determinant of political silence is social peer pressure rather than state coercion, and that increasing emotional polarization, fear of social isolation, and the rising costs of political debates drive individuals toward silence.

In the theoretical model of this study, political silence is examined across five motivations. These are: potential personal harm, the desire to act in harmony with one's environment, value- and ethics-based attitudes, reactions to negative circumstances, and hopelessness.

4.1. Perceived Risk-Based Political Silence

Developments that leave individuals vulnerable to potential personal harm can arise for various reasons. An individual may differ from the management team due to their political stances and opinions. In such a case, the individual may not want to make their political differences visible, as they believe that doing so could lead to potential harm. Because of their political differences, they may be denied a role in management, face obstacles to academic advancement, or be forced to leave their jobs.

Sometimes, sweeping changes also disrupt an individual's routine. Change often creates risk; it triggers an individual's anxieties about the future. An individual may be unable to grasp change in all its dimensions on their own. During this process, the individual needs the support of their coworkers or the organization to adapt to changing conditions. In such situations, acceptance from coworkers and the organization becomes crucial. In such environments, if an individual anticipates that their differences will lead to exclusion, they conduct a cost-benefit analysis. Here, the key concept is expectation,

and the management of expectations is intertwined with power dynamics (Brito-Vieira, 2021).

Even if a person wishes to express their political views, they may experience inner conflict when they refrain out of fear of potential harm. In such situations, the person may choose to suppress their views by rationalizing them. For example, they may convince themselves that expressing their political views will be ineffective or will not bring about any change. The reason is the individual's desire to achieve a coherent, consistent mental state. The presence of cognitive dissonance—a psychologically distressing state—will lead the individual to reduce the dissonance and actively avoid the causes and information that would increase it (Festinger, 1962).

4.2. Conformity-Based Political Silence

To develop a high level of awareness of conformity, individuals constantly evaluate prevailing public opinion, both personally and through the media. As a result of this evaluation, the individual decides whether to express their thoughts or censor them (Çakıcı, 2007). If there is an expectation of exclusion, the individual chooses to remain silent. "Howling with the wolves certainly makes one happier, but if you do not endorse a generally accepted situation, it is best to remain silent" (Noelle-Neumann, 1998).

Exclusion refers to individuals or groups being excluded from social and professional interactions by others in their environment, typically without a clear reason. In the workplace, this exclusion manifests as the active or passive obstruction by other individuals or groups of an individual's or group's ability to form positive relationships, achieve professional success, and gain professional standing. This situation not only has negative effects on individual well-being and motivation; it can also seriously undermine organizational collaboration, team dynamics, knowledge sharing, and the capacity for innovation. On the other hand, adopting an inclusive, supportive, and non-discriminatory work culture can lay a foundation for creativity and innovation by fostering feelings of belonging, motivation, and trust among individuals (Dikili, 2023).

4.3. Value/Ethics-Based Political Silence

Values are the fundamental beliefs and principles that guide the lifestyles, behaviors, and decisions of individuals and societies. Any word, idea, action, work, or object that is desired, needed, or meaningful contains a social value (Özcan, 2022). In a political context, values shape individuals' political judgments, preferences, and actions.

Universal values generally encompass widely accepted principles such as human rights, justice, and freedom. Cultural values are those that have developed within a society's or culture's historical and social structure. These values are closely linked to elements such as society's religious beliefs, traditions, and social structures. Such values can have a profound impact on political behavior, as individuals' fundamental beliefs and norms can be decisive in shaping political decision-making.

Morality involves the systematic evaluation of concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong. Political morality, on the other hand, encompasses the ethical dimension of the behavior of political actors and citizens. In the process of making political decisions, moral evaluations play a significant role alongside utilitarian or pragmatic approaches.

In terms of political behavior, individuals often face moral dilemmas in their decisions and actions. For example, a political actor may infringe upon the rights of some individuals while seeking to increase social welfare, or citizens may be forced to choose between their personal values and social norms.

Moral dilemmas complicate political decision-making; they can influence individuals' political participation or their decision to remain silent. Ethically complex issues can lead to indecision or hesitation among individuals, thereby fostering political silence.

In this context, a conflict between the social and political nature of human beings and their values and moral principles compels individuals either to remain silent or to appear to accept the prevailing opinion. Within the social structure, there is an explicit power that

has been institutionalized according to societal values and exerts influence over the entire society. This power, which exerts influence over society, preserves its own order and ensures its continuity by producing individuals who conform to it. It does not seem possible for a person, forced to live under the yoke of rules determined by society—which are often irrational—to be free and autonomous (Castoriadis, 2001). Duhm (1996) points out that, while society is a force that governs people, it is also threatening. This is because, within society, what others think of a person and whether they will be loved and respected is of great importance.

4.4. Protest-Based Political Silence

Political silence does not always arise from fear, the expectation of personal gain, or the pursuit of social harmony. In some cases, individuals may choose silence as a conscious form of response and protest against existing political or administrative practices. In such cases, silence is a symbolic act that expresses disapproval of the existing order, decision-making processes, or practices. In other words, rather than openly expressing their views, individuals choose to remain silent to express their dissatisfaction (Hirschman, 1970; Scott, 1985).

Protest-based political silence stems from an individual's refusal to recognize current conditions as legitimate. In particular, situations such as unjust practices, violations of the principle of merit, administrative pressures, exclusion from decision-making processes, the systematic disregard of expressed views, or decision-makers' unwillingness to accept criticism can lead individuals to choose silence over speaking out. This silence constitutes a behavior deliberately adopted to withhold support for current practices and to symbolically oppose them (Scott, 1990; Tarrow, 2022).

The "Exit, Voice, and Loyalty" approach developed by Hirschman (1970) makes significant contributions to our understanding of protest-based political silence. According to Hirschman, when individuals experience dissatisfaction, they may respond in different ways: by raising their voices (voice), leaving the system (exit), or tolerating the status quo (loyalty). However, in some cases, individuals choose neither to object directly nor to leave the system. Instead, they may adopt silence as a conscious form of response. From this perspective, silence can serve as a symbolic protest against the existing order rather than mere passivity.

Scott (1985), on the other hand, notes that open resistance is not always possible in environments where power relations are pronounced, and that individuals often oppose the existing authority through indirect behaviors such as silence, withdrawal, feigning indifference, or passive resistance. According to Scott, although such behaviors may appear passive on the surface, they can constitute a significant form of resistance to power relations. Viewed from this perspective, protest-based political silence does not indicate that the individual has lost interest in the political process; rather, it demonstrates that the individual disapproves of current political practices and is using silence as a conscious political stance.

Consequently, protest-based political silence differs from political silence based on perceived risk or hopelessness. In political silence driven by perceived risk, individuals remain silent to avoid potential repercussions. In contrast, in political silence driven by hopelessness, the belief that change is impossible is the determining factor. Protest-based political silence is an expression of conscious opposition to existing practices and symbolic resistance. For this reason, silence can be viewed not as a passive state in which political participation has completely ceased, but as an alternative form of political expression and protest under certain conditions (Scott, 1985; Tarrow, 2022).

4.5. Hopelessness-Based Political Silence

Political silence rooted in hopelessness occurs when individuals or social groups, despite being dissatisfied with the existing political order, government, or policies, cease to react because they believe they lack the power to change anything, and consciously choose to remain silent. This is not mere indifference or acquiescence; on the contrary, it

harbors a deep sense of disappointment and helplessness. Individuals have tried to make their voices heard in the past, participated in protests, or voted, only to see that nothing has changed. This situation creates a sense of learned helplessness by reinforcing the perception that "no matter what I do, the outcome will not change." The absence of an alternative political elite within the system can also give rise to political silence rooted in hopelessness.

Sometimes, individuals actively follow the political agenda and are aware of what is happening. They are disturbed by the course of events, but they consciously distance themselves from public discourse so as not to waste their energy.

Political alienation can also lead to political silence rooted in hopelessness. Political alienation arises when an individual ceases to see themselves as part of the political system and completely loses trust in state mechanisms and institutions. From the individual's perspective, the political belief system (Sarıbay, 2026) has eroded, and from the state's perspective, its legitimacy has been undermined (Habermas, 1992); as a result, the individual has fallen into despair amid active political processes.

5. Research Methodology

5.1. Research Objective, Method, and Limitations

The purpose of this study is to develop a valid and reliable Political Silence Scale to measure individuals' levels of political silence and the factors that lead to it. Although the phenomenon of political silence has been an important topic of research for many years across various disciplines—such as political communication, public opinion, freedom of expression, and political participation—existing studies (Kuran, 1997; Glynn et al., 1997; Neuman, 1998; Scheufele & Moy, 2000; Moy et al., 2001; Petric & Pinter, 2002; Willnat et al., 2002; Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Chen, 2018; Matthes et al., 2018) have largely focused on theoretical discussions or empirical research examining the relationships between specific variables. In contrast, few measurement instruments with comprehensively tested psychometric properties can assess individuals' political silence behaviors and the underlying reasons for these behaviors within a holistic framework. This situation highlights the need for new measurement instruments capable of reliably and validly measuring the various dimensions of political silence. In this context, this study aimed to develop an assessment tool capable of evaluating the phenomenon of political silence from a multidimensional perspective, with psychometric properties tested in accordance with international scale development criteria. It is expected that the developed scale will not only contribute to theoretical discussions in the field of political silence but also serve as a valid and reliable data-collection tool for future quantitative studies with different sample groups.

This study is a methodological scale-development project aimed at creating a valid and reliable measurement tool to assess individuals' levels of political silence. The research process followed the scale-development principles proposed in the literature (Churchill, 1979; Clark & Watson, 1995; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006; Seçer, 2015; Morgoda et al., 2017; DeVellis, 2017; Boateng et al., 2018). In this context, a comprehensive literature review was first conducted, followed by a qualitative data collection process aimed at developing scale items, and a draft item pool was prepared based on the findings.

In the quantitative phase of the study, validity and reliability analyses were conducted to assess the psychometric properties of the draft scale developed. Accordingly, the scale's construct validity was assessed using Exploratory Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis, while its reliability was tested using internal consistency coefficients and other statistical analyses. Details regarding the research methodology, research model, population and sample, scale development process, and validity and reliability analyses are presented in detail under the following headings.

This study has some limitations. First, the study used data from academics working in Türkiye, collected as part of the initial phase of the scale development process. Although this sample was chosen because these academics possess a high level of knowledge about political issues and constitute a group capable of evaluating the scale items effectively, the direct generalization of the findings to other occupational groups and the general public should be approached with caution. For this reason, it is important to retest the Political Silence Scale in samples with different sociodemographic characteristics to confirm its construct validity and reliability across different study groups.

Another limitation of the study is that criterion-related validity analysis could not be conducted due to the lack of an established measurement tool that directly assesses political silence and has demonstrated psychometric properties, and because such a scale was not used when creating the draft item pool. Although content validity, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, and reliability analyses were comprehensively evaluated during the scale development process, examining the criterion-related validity of the developed scale by administering it alongside scales that measure similar theoretical constructs is considered an important requirement for future studies.

Although a second-order confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in this study to evaluate the scale's hierarchical structure, it is important to retest this structure in different samples. In particular, examining the consistency of the higher-order factor structure across different cultural contexts and sample characteristics will strengthen the empirical evidence regarding the scale's total score. Furthermore, administering the scale across different age and occupational groups, as well as diverse cultural samples, will contribute to a comprehensive evaluation of its psychometric properties, including measurement invariance, criterion-related validity, and discriminant validity. Studies conducted in this vein will expand the scale's scope of application across different research contexts and provide a stronger foundation for the measurement tool's scientific validity.

This study used cross-sectional data. Since political silence is a dynamic phenomenon that can change over time in response to political, social, and institutional conditions, future longitudinal studies that assess the scale's stability and changes in political silence will make significant contributions to the literature.

5.2. Research Model

For the theoretical model of the study, the literature on political silence, the spiral of silence, political participation, political behavior, and organizational silence was comprehensively reviewed; the individual, psychological, social, and political factors cited in the literature as contributing to the emergence of political silence were evaluated collectively. Given theoretical approaches in the literature suggesting that political silence does not arise from a single cause but can develop under different motivations and social conditions, each dimension of the scale was conceptualized to represent a distinct source of motivation for political silence. Accordingly, political silence was conceptualized within the framework of five theoretical dimensions: fear/self-interest-based political silence (Hirschman, 1970; Scott, 1990; Kuran, 1997; Neumann, 1998; Hayes et al., 2005; Chan, 2018), social conformity (approval-seeking)-based political silence (Asch, 1958; Taylor, 1982; Neumann, 1998; Glynn et al., 1997; Hayes et al., 2005; Matthes et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2014), hopelessness-based political silence (Seligman, 1975; Abramson et al., 1978; Karp & Banducci, 2008; Bernardi et al., 2023; Ojeda, 2015), ethics/value-based political silence (Skitka, 2010; Haidt, 2025; Graham et al., 2009; Yılmaz, 2022), and resistance/protest-based political silence (Hirschman, 1970; Scott, 1985; Sezer Şanlı, 2022; Tarrow, 2022). However, these dimensions were not regarded as a predetermined factor structure at the outset of the study; rather, they were examined through Exploratory Factor Analysis to determine how the developed item pool was structured.

The construct validity of the scale was first examined using an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), followed by a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to validate the factor

structure derived from the EFA. The final factor structure was determined by integrating the theoretical framework and statistical findings, and the Political Silence Scale was developed accordingly. Figure 1 presents the theoretical research model developed prior to conducting the exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses.

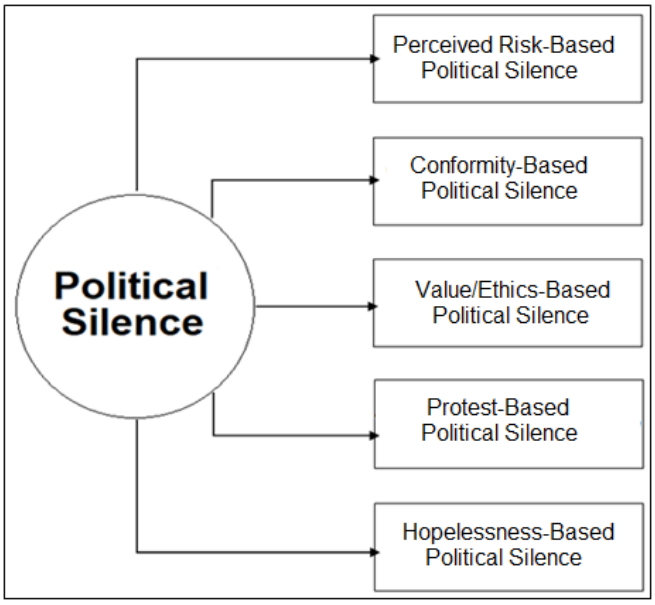


Figure 1. Research Model

The fear- and interest-based political silence posited in the research model refers to individuals remaining silent because expressing their political views might lead to social, economic, professional, or political repercussions, or because they wish to protect their existing interests. Political silence driven by social conformity (the search for approval) refers to individuals refraining from expressing their political views to maintain harmony with their social circles, gain acceptance, avoid conflict, or prevent exclusion. Political silence rooted in hopelessness describes the behavior of remaining silent stemming from the belief that expressing political views will not bring about any change, that one cannot influence political processes, or that the individual's voice will not be taken into account. Ethics/values-based political silence, on the other hand, refers to individuals consciously choosing not to express their views on political issues in accordance with their ethical principles, moral values, cultural norms, or sense of social responsibility. Finally, resistance/protest-based political silence is defined as a form of political silence in which individuals consciously remain silent to protest the existing political order or political actors.

5.3. Research Population and Sample

In scale development studies, it is recommended to select samples that have a high level of conceptual understanding of the research topic, can interpret scale items accurately, and can provide consistent evaluations, in order to properly assess the psychometric properties of the measurement instrument being developed (Clark & Watson, 1995; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006; DeVellis, 2017; Boateng et al., 2018).

The study population consisted of 186,942 academics employed at public and foundation universities in Türkiye, based on 2025 data from YÖK. Given the large population and the impracticality of conducting the study across the entire population, it was decided to conduct the research with academics who could represent the target population.

The primary reasons for selecting academics for this study are their high level of knowledge and awareness of political issues, their ability to evaluate social and political

developments from a critical perspective, and the fact that they form a heterogeneous research group representing diverse intellectual approaches. By the very nature of their scholarly work, academics closely follow political and social developments, produce analyses of these topics, and can discuss differing viewpoints within an academic framework. Furthermore, although they are public servants, the nature of their scientific work allows them to operate in an academic environment that is more conducive to the discussion, analysis, and critical evaluation of political and social issues than that of other public employees. These characteristics ensure that they represent a suitable research group capable of evaluating the various causes of political silence and interpreting the items of the developed scale in a conceptually sound manner. In addition, involving academics from different universities and various academic fields in the study would increase the sample's diversity and thereby contribute to a more accurate assessment of the construct validity and reliability of the developed scale.

In this context, the study's sample was determined using a stratified sampling method. The list of academics on the YÖK Academic website was stratified according to basic science fields. Emails were sent to the institutional email addresses of a total of 16,000 academics—8,000 between February 1, 2026, and February 20, 2026, for exploratory factor analysis, and 8,000 between March 1, 2026, and March 17, March 2026, for confirmatory factor analysis—totaling 16,000 academics—were sent emails to their institutional email addresses inviting them to participate in the study. Of the academics who received emails for exploratory factor analysis, 653 responded, and of those who received emails for confirmatory factor analysis, 661 responded. After data collection, the questionnaires were reviewed. During this process, 14 questionnaires [AFA (3), DFA (11)] containing missing data or providing incorrect responses to the control item added to the questionnaire for verification purposes were excluded from the analysis. Additionally, during the analysis phase, 10 outliers were excluded from the exploratory factor analysis, and 7 from the confirmatory factor analysis. After completing the data cleaning process, statistical analyses were conducted on the remaining 640 data sets for exploratory factor analysis and on 643 for confirmatory factor analysis.

A generally accepted recommendation in the literature regarding scale development is to determine the sample size so that there are at least 10 participants per item (Field, 2009). Similarly, Alpar (2013) emphasized that the item-to-person ratio should be 10. According to Gorsuch (1983), when determining sample size for factor analysis, the sample should include at least 5 participants per variable and should not be less than 100 (Thompson, 2008; Erkuş, 2014; Seçer, 2015). Furthermore, it has been noted that a sample size of 200 is moderate, 300 is good, 500 is very good, and 1,000 is excellent for factor analysis (Karagöz, 2016). Therefore, the dataset analyzed has a very good sample size.

5.4. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

As both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were planned within the scope of the study, separate datasets were collected for each analysis, and particular attention was paid to ensuring that both samples adequately represented the target population.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Research Sample

Variable	Category	EFA (n=640)		CFA (n=643)	
		n	%	n	%
Gender	Female	280	43,8	309	48
	Male	360	56,3	334	52
Academic Rank	Professor	111	17,3	141	21,93
	Associate Professor	116	18,1	96	14,93
	Assistant Professor	201	31,4	154	23,95
	Lecturer	115	18	122	18,97
	Research Assistant	97	15,2	130	20,22
Age	18–25	5	0,8	4	0,62
	26–40	293	45,8	297	46,19
	41–60	313	48,9	310	48,21
	61–65	18	2,8	19	2,95
	66 and above	11	1,7	13	2,02
Academic Experience	Less than 1 year	9	1,4	7	1,09
	1–5 years	110	17,2	107	16,64
	6–10 years	125	19,5	119	18,51
	11–15 years	173	27	158	24,57
	16–20 years	81	12,7	96	14,93
	21–25 years	53	8,3	82	12,75
	26 and above	89	13,9	74	11,51

In the sample created for exploratory factor analysis, 43.8% (n=280) of the participants were women and 56.3% (n=360) were men. 17.3% of the participants (n=111) were professors, 18.1% (n=116) were associate professors, 31.4% (n=201) were assistant professors, 18% (n=115) were lecturers, and 15.2% (n=97) were research assistants. In terms of age distribution, 0.8% (n=5) were aged 18–25, 45.8% (n=293) were aged 26–40, 41–60 years old (48.9%, n=313), 61–65 years old (2.8%, n=18), and 1.7% (11) were 66 years and older. When examining the participants' years of professional experience, 1.4% (n=9) had less than one year, 17.2% (n=110) had 1–5 years, 19.5% (n=125) had 6–10 years, and 27.0% (n=173) had 11–15 years of professional experience. Additionally, it was found that 12.7% of the participants (n=81) had 16–20 years of professional seniority, 8.3% (n=53) had 21–25 years, and 13.9% (n=89) had 26 years or more.

Of the sample created for confirmatory factor analysis, 48% (n=309) were women and 52% (n=334) were men. By academic rank, 21.93% (n=141) were professors, 14.93% (n=96) were associate professors, 23.95% (n=154) were assistant professors, 18.97% (n=122) were lecturers, and 20.22% (n=130) were research assistants. In terms of the age variable, 0.62% (n=4) were in the 18–25 age range, 46.19% (n=297) were in the 26–40 age range, 48.21% (n=310) were in the 41–60 age range, 2.95% (n=19) are in the 61–65 age group, while 2.02% (n=13) of the participants are 66 years of age or older. In terms of years of professional experience, 1.09% (n=7) had less than one year, 16.64% (n=107) had 1–5 years, 18.51% (n=119) had 6–10 years, 24.57% (n=158) have 11–15 years, 14.93% (n=96) have 16–20 years, 12.75% (n=82) have 21–25 years, and 11.51% (n=74) have 26 years or more of professional seniority.

5.5. Scale Development Process

In the literature review, no widely accepted scale with comprehensively tested psychometric properties was found that directly measures political silence as a multidimensional construct. Therefore, while establishing the theoretical framework of this study, theoretical and empirical works that help explain the causes of political silence were reviewed (Asch, 1958; Hirschman, 1970; Seligman, 1975; Abramson et al., 1978; Taylor, 1982; Scott, 1985; Scott, 1990; Kuran, 1997; Glynn et al., 1997; Noelle-Neumann,

1998; Hayes et al., 2005; Karp & Banducci, 2008; Graham et al., 2009; Matthes et al., 2010; Skitka, 2010; Lee et al., 2014; Ojeda, 2015; Chan, 2018; Bayram & Bayer, 2019; Sezer Şanlı, 2022; Tarrow, 2022; Yılmaz, 2022; Bernardi et al., 2023; Haidt, 2025) were comprehensively reviewed, and researchers developed a draft item pool consisting of a total of 50 items based on information obtained from unstructured interviews.

In the scale development process, expert evaluation plays a critical role in establishing content validity and determining whether the items adequately represent the construct being measured (DeVellis, 2017). For this reason, 10 faculty members specializing in Turkish Language and Literature, Political Science, Public Administration, Law, and Sociology were contacted via email to inform them of the subject and the importance of the study, and to ask whether they would be willing to assist in ensuring the content validity of the research. All experts indicated they could contribute to the research, and based on their evaluations, 20 statements were removed from the item pool using the Lawshe technique because they did not receive valid scores. The scale was prepared in Likert format. Likert-type scales are measures that reveal individuals' attitudes, behaviors, judgments, or tendencies regarding a specific phenomenon through their responses to ordered options (Özdamar, 2017). The Likert scaling technique provides an effective means of measuring multidimensional constructs and allows the relative contribution of each dimension to be reflected in the overall scale score. Accordingly, the Political Silence Scale was designed using a five-point Likert format. The questionnaire prepared for this study consists of two main sections. The first section includes items on participants' demographic characteristics, whereas the second section comprises five-point Likert-type statements derived from the political silence item pool.

Following the expert evaluation, the remaining 30 items in the draft item pool were transformed into a questionnaire format using a five-point Likert scale. Prior to data collection, ethical approval for the study was obtained from the institution with which the researchers are affiliated.

Prior to the main implementation, the study was conducted as a pilot with 102 participants who were similar to the target population. During the pilot process, participants completed the questionnaire within approximately 5 to 8 minutes and did not report any items that were unclear or difficult to understand.

Internal consistency analyses were performed using the data collected during the pilot study. The purpose of the internal consistency analysis was to determine whether the statements remaining in the draft item pool consistently measured the conceptual structure. Within the scope of the internal consistency analyses, item–total score correlations and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated for the items remaining in the draft item pool following the elimination process. In internal consistency testing, items with item–total correlation coefficients lower than ±0.10 or Cronbach's Alpha values below 0.40 should be excluded from the scale (Seçer, 2015). Furthermore, it has been suggested that items should be removed when their exclusion leads to an increase of at least 5% in the overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (DeVellis, 2017; Hair et al., 2019). Based on the internal consistency analyses conducted using the pilot study data, items with item–total correlation coefficients below ±0.10 and those that did not satisfy the Cronbach's Alpha reliability criterion were removed individually, and the analyses were repeated iteratively until the draft scale achieved an acceptable reliability level. As a result of this process, 7 items that failed to meet the required criteria were excluded from the scale. Consequently, a final draft consisting of 23 items, none of which contained negatively worded statements, was obtained. Following the pilot application, the revised draft scale was administered to the main study group, and the Political Silence Scale was developed based on the data collected from this implementation.

6. Findings

6.1. Validity

Content Validity

Content validity refers to an evaluation process used to determine how adequately the items in a scale represent the construct being measured and the extent to which each item contributes to the overall purpose of the research. During this process, the statements in the draft item pool are carefully reviewed to ensure the scale includes items most representative of the construct under investigation (Ayre & Scally, 2014). The assessment of content validity requires examining both the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and the Content Validity Index (CVI). The Content Validity Ratio (CVR) is used to assess the extent to which experts consider each item in the preliminary item pool essential for measuring the targeted construct (Boateng et al., 2018). According to the method proposed by Lawshe (1975), the CVR is calculated by subtracting the number of experts who identified an item as necessary from half the total number of experts, then dividing the result by the same proportion. The resulting coefficient ranges from −1 to +1. Items with a CVR value of 0 or below, as well as those failing to satisfy the Content Validity Index (CVI) threshold, are recommended for exclusion from the scale (Ayre & Scally, 2014; Lawshe, 1975; Wilson et al., 2012). Following the expert assessment process, 20 items with CVR values of 0 or lower and CVI values below 0.800 were excluded from the scale.

Construct Validity

Preliminary Analyses

The questionnaire used to assess construct validity was administered to participants between February 1, 2026, and February 20, 2026. Prior to conducting the factor analysis, preliminary analyses were performed to evaluate the suitability of the data set and the adequacy of the sample size for factor-analytic procedures (Field, 2009; Güriş & Astar, 2015). Accordingly, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was initially calculated, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was performed to evaluate whether the dataset was appropriate for factor analysis. The findings obtained from these analyses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Results

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.944
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	15180.795
	df	780
	Sig.	*0.000*

As shown in Table 2, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value calculated for the Political Silence Scale was 0.944, indicating a high level of sampling adequacy for factor analysis. In addition, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a statistically significant result (p=0.000; p<0.05), demonstrating that the dataset was suitable for factor analytic procedures.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

After determining that the scale items were suitable for factor analysis, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted to establish the scale's construct validity. Exploratory factor analysis is performed using various computational techniques. The most commonly used techniques include principal component analysis, common factor analysis, the maximum likelihood method, the weighted least squares method, the generalized least squares method, the alpha method, and the image factor method (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Fabrigar et al., 1999). In the scale development process, Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) was used to identify the scale's true factor structure and the fundamental dimensions that distinguish the variables; based on the assumption that factors may be interrelated, the Direct Oblimin rotation method was applied among the

oblique rotation methods. In determining the number of factors, the lower limits for factor eigenvalues were set at 1 and for factor loadings at 0.40, based on their contributions to total variance. Factors with loadings below these thresholds were excluded, as their contribution to total variance was deemed insufficient. Additionally, the lower limit for the difference in item factor loadings (end loadings) must be 0.10 (DeVellis, 2017).

The exploratory factor analysis initially included 23 items. The first analysis revealed a five-factor structure with eigenvalues exceeding 1, and items with factor loadings below 0.50 were excluded from the scale. Following the removal of these items, the analysis was repeated, resulting in a four-factor structure with eigenvalues greater than 1. Subsequent examination of the factor structure indicated that several items had factor loadings below 0.40 and that the difference between their loadings on the relevant factor and other factors was 0.10 or less, suggesting cross-loadings. These items were therefore considered unsuitable and removed from the scale. As a consequence of the exploratory factor analysis process, a total of three items that failed to satisfy the required criteria were excluded from the measurement instrument. In its final form, the 20-item Political Silence Scale was found to have an eigenvalue greater than 1, to be grouped into 4 factors, and to have items within each factor that were meaningfully and consistently distributed across the dimensions (Table 3, Figure 2, Table 4).

Table 3. Total Variance Explained in Exploratory Factor Analysis

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	6.875	34.377	34.377	6.461	32.305	32.305	5.108
2	3.079	15.394	49.770	2.650	13.251	45.556	3.425
3	1.952	9.759	59.530	1.550	7.749	53.305	4.404
4	1.237	6.183	65.712	0.796	3.978	57.283	3.786

The exploratory factor analysis indicated that the Political Silence Scale comprises 20 items, grouped into 4 factors. Examination of the total variance explained table showed that the cumulative variance explained by the rotated factor structure was 57.283%. Accordingly, the four-factor structure accounted for 57.283% of the total variance. In scale development studies, an explained variance rate of at least 40% is generally considered acceptable (DeVellis, 2017; Costello & Osborne, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2015). Therefore, the findings suggest that the Political Silence Scale demonstrates adequate explained variance for measurement purposes.

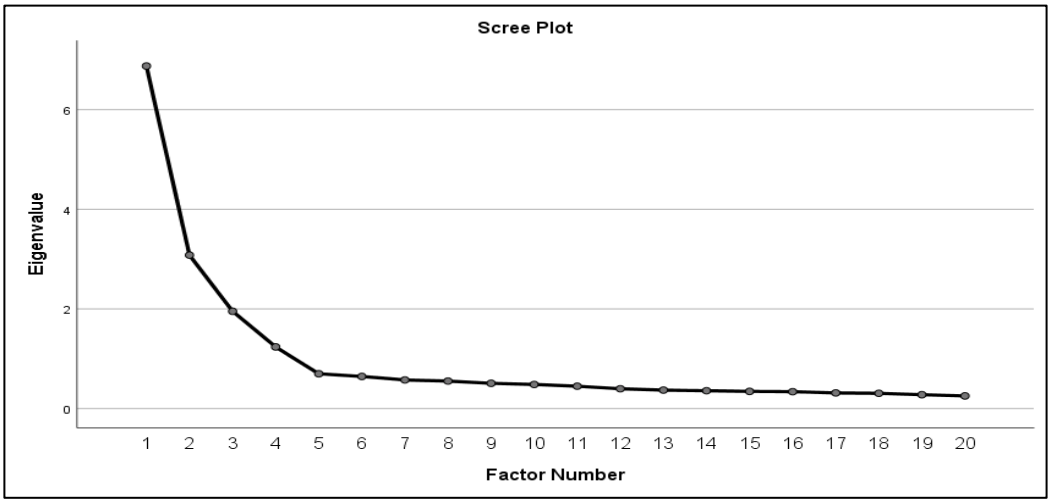


Figure 2. Exploratory Factor Analysis Scree Plot

In scree plot, the point at which the eigenvalue falls below 1 indicates the number of factors (Kaiser, 1974; Finch, 2023; Auerswald & Moshagen, 2019). Accordingly, after the fourth factor, the eigenvalues decreased below 1 and displayed a relatively horizontal pattern. Therefore, the Political Silence Scale was determined to have an optimal 4-factor structure.

Table 4. Factors and Factor Loadings of the Items Obtained from the Exploratory Factor Analysis

Item	Factors				Communality
	1	2	3	4	
I37	0.838				0.697
I35	0.818				0.684
I32	0.813				0.680
I38	0.761				0.594
I33	0.696				0.542
I39	0.618				0.588
I10		0.785			0.604
I8		0.750			0.529
I6		0.749			0.542
I4		0.703			0.595
I1		0.694			0.589
I17			0.816		0.650
I12			0.621		0.392
I11			0.609		0.487
I14			0.597		0.548
I16			0.565		0.504
I29				0.835	0.679
I27				0.671	0.422
I30				0.600	0.595
I26				0.593	0.533

The results of the exploratory factor analysis indicated that the Political Silence Scale consists of 20 items with factor loadings ranging between 0.565 and 0.838. In addition, the communality values of the items (≥0.30) demonstrate that the identified factors sufficiently explain the variance associated with the items.

In developing the theoretical model for this study, political silence was examined within the framework of five distinct sources of motivation (political silence based on fear/self-interest, social conformity, hopelessness, ethics/values, and resistance/protest). However, the results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis revealed that the items representing hopelessness-based political silence did not form the expected factor structure; some items exhibited low factor loadings and did not sufficiently differentiate from other factors. Consequently, the relevant items were removed from the scale, and the analyses ultimately yielded a four-factor structure that was psychometrically stronger.

Since no established scale directly measures political silence within the scope of validity analyses, a criterion-related validity analysis could not be conducted. However, theoretical studies were used in developing the item pool; construct validity was comprehensively tested using EFA and CFA, and reliability was assessed using internal consistency analyses.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Lastly, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed to test and verify the factor structure of the Political Silence Scale. Confirmatory factor analysis is a statistical technique employed to examine the structural relationships among variables and to test the hypothesized factor structure of a measurement model (Brown, 2015; Kline, 2016; Byrne, 2016). This method is used to determine whether the observed variables are associated with the theoretically proposed latent factors and whether these latent factors are structurally related to one another. Accordingly, confirmatory factor analysis was employed to test whether the factor structure obtained from the exploratory factor

analysis was supported by the observed data and to evaluate the extent to which the observed variables fit the scale's subdimensions. For this reason, a first-order confirmatory factor analysis was conducted.

A first-order confirmatory factor analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Amos 23. The initial model produced the following fit indices: CMIN = 492.858, DF = 164, *p = 0.000*, CMIN/DF = 3.005, RMSEA = 0.056, CFI = 0.951, and GFI = 0.926. Subsequently, the modification indices were reviewed, and four modifications were implemented in accordance with the suggested covariance relationships. After establishing the relevant covariances, the model was retested, and the final results are presented in Figure 3.

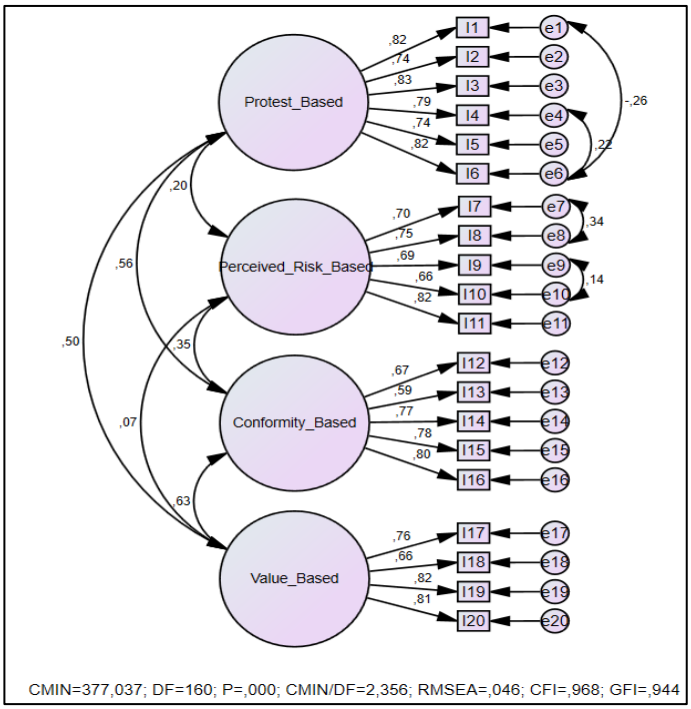


Figure 3. Standardized Path Diagram for First-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis

After the recommended modifications were applied to the Political Silence Scale model, the fit indices improved to the following values: CMIN = 377.037, DF = 160, *p = 0.000*, CMIN/DF = 2.356, RMSEA = 0.046, CFI = 0.968, and GFI = 0.944. In confirmatory factor analysis, the adequacy of the model is evaluated by considering established threshold values for goodness-of-fit indices (Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hooper et al., 2008; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2016; Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003; Schumacker & Lomax, 2016). A comparison between these recommended threshold values and the fit indices obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis of the Political Silence Scale is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Goodness-of-Fit Threshold Values and Goodness-of-Fit Index Values of the Political Silence Scale

Fit Indices	Recommended Threshold Values	Fit Index Values First-Order Measurement Model of the Political Silence Scale	Interpretation
x^2/df	x^2/df ≤ 2,5= Excellent Fit x^2/df ≤ 5 = Good Fit	*2.356*	*Excellent Fit*
RMSEA	RMSEA≤0,05= Excellent Fit RMSEA≤0,08= Good Fit	*0.046*	*Excellent Fit*
SRMR	SRMR≤0,05= Excellent Fit SRMR≤0,08= Good Fit	*0.0458*	*Excellent Fit*
GFI	GFI≥0,950= Excellent Fit GFI≥0,900= Good Fit	*0.944*	*Good Fit*
AGFI	AGFI≥0,950= Excellent Fit AGFI≥0,900= Good Fit	*0.926*	*Good Fit*
TLI	TLI≥0,950= Excellent Fit TLI≥0,900= Good Fit	*0.962*	*Excellent Fit*
CFI	CFI≥0,950= Excellent Fit CFI≥0,900= Good Fit	*0.968*	*Excellent Fit*
IFI	IFI≥0,950= Excellent Fit IFI≥0,900= Good Fit	*0.968*	*Excellent Fit*
NFI	NFI≥0,950= Excellent Fit NFI≥0,900= Good Fit	*0.945*	*Good Fit*
RFI	RFI≥0,950= Excellent Fit RFI≥0,900= Good Fit	*0.935*	*Good Fit*

Regarding the goodness-of-fit indices for the 20-item Political Silence Scale, χ^2/df was 2.356, indicating excellent model fit. The RMSEA value of 0.046 indicated a very good level of fit, and the SRMR value of 0.0458 also indicated excellent fit. In addition, the GFI and AGFI values were 0.944 and 0.926, respectively, both indicating good model fit. The TLI, CFI, and IFI values were 0.962, 0.968, and 0.968, respectively, indicating an excellent fit. Furthermore, the NFI and RFI values of 0.945 and 0.935, respectively, indicated that the model exhibited a good fit overall.

The path coefficients from the first-order confirmatory factor analysis are also presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Standardized Path Coefficients of the First-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Item	Path	Factor	β0	β1	S.E.	C.R.	*p*
I1	<---	Protest_Based	0.824	1			
I2	<---	Protest_Based	0.744	0.866	0.042	20.861	***
I3	<---	Protest_Based	0.833	0.978	0.040	24.263	***
I4	<---	Protest_Based	0.791	1.019	0.045	22.422	***
I5	<---	Protest_Based	0.743	0.919	0.044	20.812	***
I6	<---	Protest_Based	0.817	1.012	0.048	21.060	***
I7	<---	Perceived_Risk_Based	0.702	1			
I8	<---	Perceived_Risk_Based	0.745	1.011	0.049	20.502	***
I9	<---	Perceived_Risk_Based	0.689	0.983	0.066	14.814	***
I10	<---	Perceived_Risk_Based	0.660	0.924	0.065	14.255	***
I11	<---	Perceived_Risk_Based	0.823	1.094	0.065	16.779	***
I12	<---	Conformity_Based	0.670	1			
I13	<---	Conformity_Based	0.590	0.808	0.061	13.280	***
I14	<---	Conformity_Based	0.774	1.162	0.069	16.750	***
I15	<---	Conformity_Based	0.779	1.202	0.071	16.835	***
I16	<---	Conformity_Based	0.795	1.252	0.073	17.111	***
I17	<---	Value_Based	0.755	1			
I18	<---	Value_Based	0.658	0.834	0.052	16.013	***
I19	<---	Value_Based	0.820	0.952	0.048	19.972	***
I20	<---	Value_Based	0.807	1.029	0.052	19.688	***

*** *p<0,001*

According to the results of the first-order confirmatory factor analysis of the Political Silence Scale, the path coefficients that emerged were found to meet the criteria for

goodness of fit, and the path coefficients for all items in the scale's subscales were found to be statistically significant ($p<0.001$).

Following the validation of the structure obtained in the first-order confirmatory factor analysis, a second-order confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test whether the subdimensions converged under a higher-order factor of political silence. The aim was to examine the hierarchical structure of the scale and to provide evidence on whether the subdimensions form a common higher-order structure.

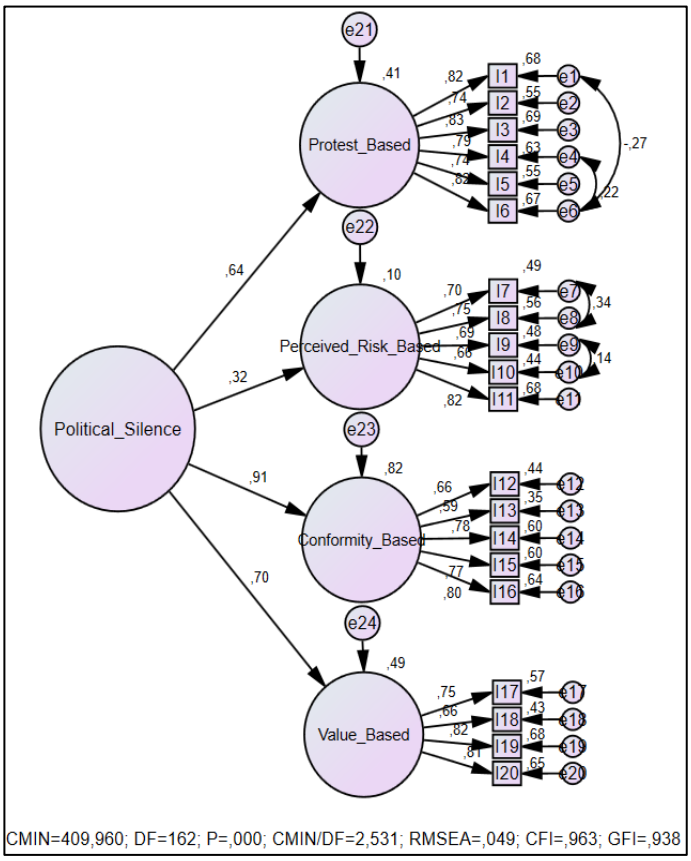


Figure 4. Standardized Path Diagram for Second-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The goodness-of-fit values and critical goodness-of-fit values obtained from the second-order confirmatory factor analysis are compared in Table 7. At the same time, the β0, β1, S.E., C.R., and p-values are given in Table 8.

Table 7. Goodness-of-Fit Indices and Acceptable Threshold Values for the Second-Order Measurement Model of the Political Silence Scale

Fit Indices	Recommended Threshold Values	Fit Index Values of the Second-Order Measurement Model of the Political Silence Scale	Interpretation
x^2/df	x^2/df ≤ 2,5= Excellent Fit x^2/df ≤ 5 = Good Fit	*2.531*	*Good Fit*
RMSEA	RMSEA≤0,05= Excellent Fit RMSEA≤0,08= Good Fit	*0.049*	*Excellent Fit*
SRMR	SRMR≤0,05= Excellent Fit SRMR≤0,08= Good Fit	*0.0559*	*Good Fit*
GFI	GFI≥0,950= Excellent Fit GFI≥0,900= Good Fit	*0.938*	*Good Fit*
AGFI	AGFI≥0,950= Excellent Fit AGFI≥0,900= Good Fit	*0.920*	*Good Fit*
TLI	TLI≥0,950= Excellent Fit TLI≥0,900= Good Fit	*0.957*	*Excellent Fit*
CFI	CFI≥0,950= Excellent Fit CFI≥0,900= Good Fit	*0.963*	*Excellent Fit*
IFI	IFI≥0,950= Excellent Fit IFI≥0,900= Good Fit	*0.963*	*Excellent Fit*
NFI	NFI≥0,950= Excellent Fit NFI≥0,900= Good Fit	*0.941*	*Good Fit*
RFI	RFI≥0,950= Excellent Fit RFI≥0,900= Good Fit	*0.930*	*Good Fit*

As shown in Table 7, the second-order measurement model also exhibits an acceptable level of fit (χ^2/df = 2.531; RMSEA = 0.049; SRMR = 0.056; GFI = 0.938; AGFI = 0.920; TLI = 0.957; CFI = 0.963; IFI = 0.963; NFI = 0.941; and RFI = 0.930).

Table 8. Standardized Path Coefficients of the Second-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis

First-order Factor	Path	Higher-order Factor	β0	β1	S.E.	C.R.	*p*
Protest_Based	<---	Political_Silence	0.639	0.627	0.046	13.682	***
Perceived_Risk_Based	<---	Political_Silence	0.319	0.244	0.038	6.441	***
Conformity_Based	<---	Political_Silence	0.905	0.674	0.046	14.647	***
Value_Based	<---	Political_Silence	0.700	0.624	0.046	13.689	***

*** *p<0,001*

According to the results of the second-order confirmatory factor analysis, the Political Silence Scale is significantly represented by four subdimensions. The standardized factor loadings from the top-level factor to the subdimensions range from 0.319 to 0.905, and all path coefficients are statistically significant (*p<0.001*). The highest standardized factor loading was found in the social conformity-based political silence dimension (β0=0.905). In contrast, the lowest standardized factor loading was found in the perceived risk-based political silence dimension (β0=0.319). It was also determined that the protest-based political silence (β0=0.639) and values-based political silence (β0= 0.700) dimensions significantly represent the overarching structure of political silence.

The findings confirm the hierarchical factor structure of the Political Silence Scale and show that the four subscales collectively represent the overall structure of political silence. Consequently, the Political Silence Scale possesses psychometric properties that allow it to be used both at the subscale level and as a total score.

Convergent Validity & Discriminant Validity

To evaluate the reliability and validity of the Political Silence Scale, Cronbach's Alpha (α), Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), the Fornell–Larcker criterion, and the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) were examined. The findings obtained from these analyses are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Reliability, Convergent Validity, and Discriminant Validity Results

Construct	α	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	HTMT
Protest Based	0.910	0.910	0.629	0.793				0.55
Perceived Risk-Based	0.858	0.847	0.527	0.204	0.726			0.34
Conformity Based	0.843	0.846	0.527	0.559	0.352	0.726		0.65
Value Based	0.844	0.847	0.582	0.496	0.067	0.634	0.763	0.65

Note: α = Cronbach's alpha; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted. Diagonal values represent the square root of AVE (√AVE). Off-diagonal values indicate inter-construct correlations. HTMT values represent heterotrait–monotrait ratios.

As presented in Table 9, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranged from 0.843 to 0.910, while the Composite Reliability (CR) values varied between 0.846 and 0.910. Since both the Cronbach's Alpha and CR coefficients exceeded the 0.70 threshold commonly recommended in the literature, the findings indicate that all scale dimensions demonstrate adequate internal consistency and reliability.

An analysis of the AVE values revealed that they ranged from 0.527 to 0.629 and were all above the recommended threshold of 0.50 for all factors. Accordingly, each factor demonstrates convergent validity by explaining more than half of the variance in its own items.

Discriminant validity among the factors was initially evaluated using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. According to this criterion, the square root of the AVE value for each factor should exceed the correlations between that factor and the remaining factors. The analysis results showed that the square roots of the AVE values ranged from 0.726 to 0.793 and were greater than the inter-factor correlation coefficients. These findings indicate that the factors demonstrate adequate discriminant validity and represent distinct constructs.

In addition, the HTMT was calculated to provide a more rigorous assessment of discriminant validity. The findings indicated that the HTMT values ranged from 0.34 to 0.65, all of which were below the recommended threshold value of 0.85. Taken together, these results demonstrate that the factors are conceptually distinct and that the measurement model has adequate validity.

6.2. Reliability

Internal Consistency

One of the most widely used methods in the social sciences for evaluating the internal consistency of Likert-type scales and determining whether scale items measure the same underlying construct is the Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient (Cronbach, 1951). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranges between 0 and 1, with values closer to 1 indicating higher reliability. In the social sciences, an alpha value of 0.70 or above is generally regarded as acceptable for demonstrating internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients calculated for the Political Silence Scale are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients for the Political Silence Scale

Factor	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Factor Cronbach's Alpha	Scale Cronbach's Alpha
F1	I32	640	2.78	1.163	14.09	0.774	0.880	0.903	0.896
	I33	640	2.41	1.132	14.45	0.664	0.896		
	I35	640	2.82	1.114	14.05	0.777	0.880		
	I37	640	2.99	1.204	13.88	0.773	0.880		
	I38	640	2.83	1.181	14.04	0.729	0.887		
	I39	640	3.05	1.168	13.82	0.693	0.892		
F2	I1	640	3.68	1.098	14.91	0.689	0.832	0.862	
	I4	640	3.74	1.055	14.84	0.697	0.829		
	I6	640	3.58	1.047	15.01	0.659	0.839		
	I8	640	3.77	1.035	14.82	0.657	0.839		
	I10	640	3.83	0.983	14.76	0.705	0.828		
F3	I11	640	3.45	1.087	13.84	0.605	0.801	0.829	
	I12	640	3.94	0.998	13.36	0.547	0.817		
	I14	640	3.39	1.101	13.90	0.658	0.786		
	I16	640	3.21	1.144	14.09	0.629	0.795		
	I17	640	3.30	1.100	14.00	0.696	0.775		
F4	I26	640	2.58	1.169	6.87	0.631	0.785	0.823	
	I27	640	2.13	1.115	7.32	0.573	0.810		
	I29	640	2.32	1.094	7.13	0.714	0.747		
	I30	640	2.42	1.131	7.03	0.674	0.765		

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the sub-dimensions of the scale are 0.903, 0.862, 0.829, and 0.823, respectively. Examination of the item-based reliability statistics further indicated that no item required removal from the scale. These findings demonstrate that the Political Silence Scale possesses a high level of internal consistency and can be considered a reliable measurement instrument.

Item Analysis

To evaluate the discriminative power of the items included in the Political Silence Scale, an independent-samples t-test based on the upper 27% and lower 27% groups was performed. The findings obtained from this analysis are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Independent Samples t-Test Results for the Upper and Lower 27% Groups

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Scale	Equal variances assumed	1.647	*0.200*	43.715	344	*0.000*	31.19653	0.71364	29.79289	32.60017
	Equal variances not assumed			43.715	337.375	*0.000*	31.19653	0.71364	29.7928	32.60027

The findings of the independent-samples t-test indicated that the group variances were homogeneous (F=1.647, *p=0.200*) and that a significant difference existed between the

lower and upper groups (t(344)=43.715, *p<0.001*). Based on these results, the items in the Political Silence Scale successfully distinguished between individuals with different levels of the measured construct.

Split-Half Reliability

Split-half reliability was also assessed to evaluate the scale items' reliability.

Table 12. Split-Half Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha	Part 1	Value	0.842
		N of Items	10[a]
	Part 2	Value	0.889
		N of Items	10[b]
	Total N of Items		20
Correlation Between Forms			0.469
Spearman-Brown Coefficient	Equal Length		0.639
	Unequal Length		0.639
Guttman Split-Half Coefficient			0.632

Note: a. The items are: I1, I4, I6, I8, I10, I11, I12, I14, I16, I17. b. The items are: I26, I27, I29, I30, I32, I33, I35, I37, I38, I39.

According to the analysis findings, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the first and second halves of the scale were calculated as 0.842 and 0.889, respectively. The correlation coefficient between the two halves of the scale was found to be 0.469. In addition, the Spearman–Brown reliability coefficient was determined to be 0.639, while the Guttman Split-Half coefficient was calculated as 0.632. Taken together, these results demonstrate that the scale has an acceptable degree of internal consistency.

Based on the factor structure that emerged following exploratory factor analysis, the factors were named, the item numbers were reorganized, and the results are presented in Table 13.

Table 13. Final Items and Factor Structure of the Political Silence Scale

Original Item Number	Revised Item Number	Factor	Item Statement
I32	I1	Protest-Based Political Silence	Remaining silent is a form of political protest for me.
I33	I2		Choosing to remain silent rather than speak is one way of drawing attention to injustices.
I35	I3		Even if I do not express my views, I prefer to show my reaction through silence.
I37	I4		Remaining silent is a way of distancing oneself from the current system.
I38	I5		Not engaging with politics is a conscious act of protest.
I39	I6		I prefer silence to clashing with the system.
I1	I7	Perceived Risk-Based Political Silence	Openly expressing my political views could harm me.
I4	I8		Discussing political issues could hurt my work or education.
I6	I9		Revealing my views could change people's attitudes towards me.
I8	I10		Expressing my political views could lead to my being labeled.
I10	I11		I believe that political discussions could make me a target.
I11	I12	Conformity-Based Political Silence	Staying away from political debates helps me maintain harmony with those around me.
I12	I13		I prefer to talk about shared values rather than politics.
I14	I14		I prefer listening and remaining silent rather than engaging in debates.
I16	I15		I avoid politics to avoid conflict with those around me.
I17	I16		Behaving harmoniously is more important to me than discussing politics.
I26	I17	Value-Based Political Silence	I do not participate in political debates because of my beliefs and values.
I27	I18		It is not right to discuss political topics, even within the family.
I29	I19		I do not express political views because I believe they do not align with moral values.
I30	I20		Political topics should not be discussed as they could jeopardize social harmony.

7. Conclusion

This study is a scale development project aimed at measuring the various motivations that lead to political silence among individuals. In this study, political silence is approached as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction of individual, societal, and value dynamics. Although the theoretical model was initially based on five dimensions, psychometric analyses revealed a four-dimensional structure. The analyses conducted in this study confirm that the developed scale is a valid and reliable measurement tool consistent with the theoretical framework.

The findings from the validity analyses demonstrate that empirical data support the proposed theoretical model. The fact that the structure identified through exploratory factor analysis was further validated by confirmatory factor analysis, —following the establishment of content validity through expert evaluations, —confirms a high degree of alignment between the scale's theoretical foundations and the observed data.

The reliability findings indicate that the scale produces consistent measurements across its overall structure and subdimensions. The level of internal consistency observed across the subdimensions supports the conclusion that the developed measurement tool is capable of producing stable results across studies conducted with different samples. As such, the scale also provides a methodological framework for applied research.

The study's main contribution is that it conceptualizes political silence as a holistic construct, grounded in multiple sources of motivation, and supports this theoretical approach with an empirically validated measurement tool. In the existing literature, political silence has predominantly been examined in the contexts of the spiral of silence, political participation, freedom of expression, and organizational silence; however, no measurement instrument has undergone a comprehensive psychometric evaluation to assess individuals' political silence behavior directly. The scale developed in this context addresses a significant methodological need in the field by integrating the dimensions of protest-based, perceived-risk-based, social-cohesion-based, and value-based silence under a common theoretical framework. Consequently, the scale can be considered a functional data collection tool for quantitative research on political behavior, political communication, public opinion, democratic participation, and freedom of expression.

The second-order confirmatory factor analysis revealed that the subdimensions could be integrated into a higher-order common factor, political silence. This suggests that, although the forms of political silence represent distinct motivations, they may be interpreted as complementary components of a single conceptual construct. Accordingly, the scale appears suitable for use both through its subdimension scores and through a total score. Furthermore, in studies that aim to explain the antecedents or consequences of political silence, examining the subdimensions separately may yield a more detailed understanding of the construct's dynamics.

It is recommended that the scale be retested in future studies across different age groups, occupational fields, and cultural contexts. Examining psychometric properties, — such as measurement invariance, test-retest reliability, and criterion-related validity, — across different samples will expand the scale's scope of application.

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